# The Influence of Mixed Feedback on Students' English Writing Ability in Senior High

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*Abstract:* This study explores the influence of three methods of feedback on the English writing ability of high school students, namely "automatic feedback + teacher feedback", "automatic feedback" and "teacher feedback". This empirical research has found that the mode of mixed feedback ("automatic feedback" + "teacher feedback") can significantly improve students' English writing ability. Besides, this mode has more advantages compared with traditional feedback modes such as "automatic feedback" or "teacher feedback". Therefore, teachers should devote themselves to exploring the feedback mechanism suitable for the students and integrating mixed feedback into the teaching of writing to improve students' English writing ability.

*Keywords:* English Writing; Teacher Feedback; Automatic Feedback; Mixed Feedback

## 1. Research background

As one of the five language skills, writing has received a lot of attention. Mei Deming and Wang Qiang (2018) point out that English writing is an important output skill. However, the problems existed in the teaching of writing have long troubled both teachers and students. According to the survey, poor feedback on writing remains one of the biggest problems. Usually, the inappropriate choice of writing feedback leads to the lack of effectiveness of it, making students be less motivated and be less interested in writing (Xie Wei, 2019).

In this information age, more and more attention has been paid to the researches on the automatic feedback. Although it has been widely used abroad, there is still a relative lack of research in this field in the context of teaching English as a second language. On the theoretical level, scholars at home and abroad have concentrated on comparing the differences between automatic feedback and teachers' feedback in terms of form, type and function, as well as the accuracy of feedback (Li Mengyuan, 2015). On the empirical level, researchers explored whether automatic feedback could improve students' writing ability through within-group comparison and between-group comparison (Bai Lifang, Wang Jian, 2019). The subjects of the empirical study mainly focus on advanced education. The results show that the automatic writing evaluation system has certain effects on the improvement of students' writing level. However, whether this evaluation system is suitable for the current situation of writing teaching in middle schools in China and whether it can improve the writing scores of students at different levels are worth discussing. Therefore, this study tries to apply the mixed feedback mode composed of "automatic feedback + teacher feedback" into the practice of English writing teaching in senior high schools, so as to verify the effectiveness of this mixed feedback in improving students' writing ability.

## 2.Research design

## 2.1Research questions

This study aims to address two questions: (1) whether the "automatic feedback + teacher feedback" mode can improve students' overall English writing ability? (2) If so, is the "automatic feedback + teacher feedback" model more effective in improving students' overall English writing ability compared with the traditional single feedback such as "automatic

feedback" or "teacher feedback"?

## 2.2Research subjects

The study included three parallel classes from the first grade of a high school. Before selecting these three classes, the author used SPSS26.0 to analyze whether the English writing levels of the students in the three classes were significant, and the analysis data were the average scores of writing in the last-term final examination. In this experiment, one class was randomly designated as the experimental class, and the other two as the control classes. Class1 adopts the mixed feedback mode composed of "automatic feedback" and "teacher feedback". However, the "automatic feedback" and "teacher feedback" were applied in Class2 and Class3 respectively.

## 2.3Research instruments

In this study, the data were mainly collected through writing tests. The author explored the influence of mixed feedback made up of "automatic feedback" and "teacher feedback" as well as single feedback such as "automatic feedback" or "teacher feedback" on students' English writing level by comparing the test results of pre-test and posttest. The pre-test was conducted in the second week of teaching, and the posttest was conducted in the eighteenth week. The type, difficulty and evaluation criteria of the two tests were the same. The scoring standards are in accordance with those for English composition in College Entrance Examination.

## 2.4Research procedures

The teaching process of each class is presented, which reflects the idea of process writing as well as the integration of writing and feedback. The teaching procedures in Class1 includes arousing writing interest, writing the first draft, conducting automatic feedback, writing the second draft, providing teachers' feedback and finalizing the draft. The teaching procedures in Class2 involves arousing writing interest, writing the first draft, conducting automatic feedback and finalizing the draft. The teaching procedures in Class3 involves arousing writing interest, writing the first draft, providing teachers' feedback and finalizing the draft. The explanation of each step is as follows. The input provided in the pre-writing stage is aimed at motivating students' writing interest and getting students prepared for the following writing. As a pre-writing stage of activating thinking in language, teachers should focus on guiding students to perceive and pay attention to communicative situations, the content of communication as well as the language that can be applied in the real context. Writing the first draft is the process in which students write independently based on the input. After that, students resort to the internet to carry out automatic feedback. Writing the second draft is a stage at which students complete the second draft based on the results of automatic feedback. As for teachers' feedback, teachers give feedback to students' composition from the three aspects of content, language and structure. Finalizing draft is the process in which students modify the article according to the teachers' feedback.

## 3.Research results

## 3.1Data analysis of scores in pretest

The author conducted a post-hoc test on writing scores in the pre-test from three parallel classes by LSD test, aiming to explore whether there were significant differences in the average scores of multiple groups of samples. The results showed no significant difference in the writing scores between the experimental class1 and controlled class 2 (I-J=0.56898, P=0.218). Besides, there was no significant difference in writing scores between experimental class1 and controlled class3 (I-J=0.69778, P=0.140). What's more, significant statistical difference in writing scores also can't be shown between controlled class2 and class3 (I-J=0.12880, P=0.786). This indicates that there are no significant differences in the writing scores of the subjects from the three parallel classes before the experiment. Thus, the following research can be carried out to explore the effects of three different modes of feedback on students' overall English writing ability.

Table1 One-Way ANOVA Test Results of the Pretest

| (I) | (J) | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Class1 | Class2 | 0.56898 | 0.46001 | 0.218 | -0.3404 | 1.4784 |
| | Class3 | 0.69778 | 0.47022 | 0.140 | -0.2318 | 1.6274 |
| Class2 | Class1 | -0.56898 | 0.46001 | 0.218 | -1.4784 | 0.3404 |
| | Class3 | 0.12880 | 0.47249 | 0.786 | -0.8053 | 1.0629 |
| Class3 | Class1 | -0.69778 | 0.47022 | 0.140 | -1.6274 | 0.2318 |
| | Class2 | -0.12880 | 0.47249 | 0.786 | -1.0629 | 0.8053 |

## 3.2 Data analysis of scores in posttest

After the experiment, the author conducted paired samples test on the scores of pretest and posttest from the three classes. The experimental results showed that there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of experimental class1 (P=0.001). However, significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of controlled class2 can't be shown through the results (P=0.403). But there was a significant difference between controlled class2 and class3 (P=0.033). This indicates that the model of mixed feedback can significantly enhance the English writing ability of senior high school students.

**Table2 Results of Paired Samples Test**

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | t | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | |
| Class1 | Pre-Post | -1.68000 | 3.27289 | 0.46286 | -2.61015 | -0.74985 | -3.630 | 0.001 |
| Class2 | Pre-Post | -0.48980 | 4.06777 | 0.58111 | -1.65820 | 0.67860 | -0.843 | 0.403 |
| Class3 | Pre-Post | -1.11111 | 3.37923 | 0.50375 | -2.12634 | -0.09588 | -2.002 | 0.033 |

Subsequently, the author tried to explore the influence of three modes of feedback through LSD test after the posttest. The results showed significant difference between experimental class1 with "automatic feedback + teacher feedback" and controlled class2 with only "automatic feedback" (I-J=1.75918, P=0.002). Similarly, there was significant difference in the writing performance between the experiment class1 and the controlled class3 (I-J=1.26667, P=0.027). However, there was no significant difference in writing performance between controlled class2 and class3 (I-J= -0.49252, P=0.389). The above results show that mixed feedback based on "automatic feedback" and "teacher feedback" can promote the writing level of high school English learners significantly compared with traditional single feedback like "automatic feedback" or "teacher feedback". Based on previous studies, students also expect the combination of "teacher feedback" and "automatic feedback" (Zou Min, 2018; Wang Lan, 2019; Zhang Li, 2020).

**Table3 One-Way ANOVA Test Results of the Posttest**

| (I) | (J) | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Class1 | Class2 | 1.75918* | 0.55508 | 0.002 | 0.6618 | 2.8565 |
| | Class3 | 1.26667* | 0.56740 | 0.027 | 0.1450 | 2.3884 |
| Class2 | Class1 | -1.75918* | 0.55508 | 0.002 | -2.8565 | -0.6618 |
| | Class3 | -0.49252 | 0.57014 | 0.389 | -1.6196 | 0.6346 |
| Class3 | Class1 | -1.26667* | 0.56740 | 0.027 | -2.3884 | -0.1450 |
| | Class2 | 0.49252 | 0.57014 | 0.389 | -0.6346 | 1.6196 |

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

## 4.Implication of the study

The results of this study show that the mixed feedback mode based on "automatic feedback" and "teacher feedback" helps to improve students' writing ability. The mode of feedback makes up for the shortcomings of the traditional single teacher feedback and the single automatic writing evaluation system. In short, teachers should establish a mixed feedback mechanism which integrates "teacher feedback" and "automatic feedback" to maximize and optimize the feedback effect, thus improving students' writing ability.

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